

Study finds lasting fatigue common after COVID-19 infection

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More than half of people with acute COVID-19 infection continue to have persistent fatigue 10 weeks after their initial illness, according to a new study published November 9 in the open-access journal *PLOS ONE* by Liam Townsend of Trinity College Dublin, Ireland and colleagues.

Fatigue is one of the most common initial presenting complaints of people infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. The long-term consequences of COVID-19 have not been well-studied and concern has been raised that the virus has the potential to trigger a post-viral [fatigue](#) syndrome.

In the new study, researchers tracked fatigue, as well as patient characteristics including COVID-19 severity, laboratory markers, levels of inflammatory markers and pre-existing conditions, in 128 study participants who had previously been infected with SARS-CoV-2. The participants, all recruited from a post-COVID-19 outpatient clinic at St. James Hospital in Dublin, Ireland, were 54% female and averaged 49.5 years old (standard deviation ± 15 years). 55.5% of the participants had been admitted to the hospital for their COVID-19

treatment while the remainder were treated as outpatients. On average, they were assessed for the study 72 days after discharge from a hospital or, if managed as an outpatient, after a timepoint 14 days following diagnosis.

Based on their score on the Chalder Fatigue Scale (CFQ-11), 52.3% (67/128) of study participants met the criteria for fatigue at the assessment point at least 6 weeks following COVID-19 infection. Only 42.2% of the patients (54/128) reported feeling back to their full health. Importantly, there was no association between COVID-19 severity, need for hospital admission, or routine laboratory markers of inflammation with the likelihood of experiencing [persistent fatigue](#) after infection. Though the study is limited in that the population cohort was predominantly white and Irish, and patients were only assessed at a single timepoint with no follow-up, the authors also found that female gender and a history of anxiety or depression was more common in the severe fatigue group ($X^2=9.95$, $p=0.002$ for female; $X^2=5.18$, $p=0.02$ for depression history).

The authors add: "This study highlights the burden of post-COVID fatigue. It also demonstrates that post-COVID fatigue is unrelated to severity of initial infection, so predicting its development is not easy."

More information: Liam Townsend et al, Persistent fatigue following SARS-CoV-2 infection is common and independent of severity of initial infection, *PLOS ONE* (2020). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0240784](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0240784)

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